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Improving socio-emotional health in vulnerable children

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Internalising and externalising problems present as difficulties in socio-emotional competence and predispose to a wide range of mental and physical health outcomes. This study examines the efficacy of an intervention (Pyramid Plus) in strengthening children's socio-emotional competencies. Participants (270 11 year old children attending schools in Northern Ireland) were screened for socio-emotional difficulties using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997) and before being allocated to attend a Pyramid Club intervention ($n = 162$), a waiting list control ($n = 55$) or a comparison group ($n = 53$). A 3×3 mixed-model design was used: group (intervention group vs. waiting list control vs. comparison group) \times 3 time points (pre- vs. post-intervention vs. 12 weeks follow up) to investigate the impact of the Pyramid Plus intervention. Teachers and children completed the SDQ-11-16 years, and children completed the TEIQue-CSF at all 3 times. SDQ total difficult, internalising and externalising scores were reduced significantly, and prosocial and emotional intelligence scores were increased significantly compared to waiting list controls post intervention and at follow up. The Pyramid Plus intervention improves the socio-emotional health of vulnerable children through promoting positive outcomes as well as reducing socio-emotional deficits.

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